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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Cap Check: Commenters Line Up on Media Ownership Limits

The **FCC's** dormant review of the 39% national television ownership cap came back to life this week, with Monday's comment deadline prompting a wave of filings from broadcast groups, advocacy organizations and industry associations.

Idle since 2018, the proceeding was [reopened in June](#) to assess whether the ownership cap and the UHF discount still serve the public interest in today's media landscape. Currently, the rule restricts broadcast groups from owning stations that combine to reach more than 39% of U.S. TV households. The FCC cited ongoing changes in the industry, the biggest of which being the growth of digital platforms that aren't held to the ownership limits, but the Commission wanted to gain more insight into overall trends in the marketplace as well.

All in Favor of Eliminating, Say 'Aye'

It's no surprise that the likes of **NAB**, **Nexstar**, **Sinclair** and **Scripps** submitted comments in support of eliminating the cap entirely or relaxing it in some fashion. **Univision**, **Fox Television Stations** and the affiliates associations of the four major broadcast networks joined them in saying the rule doesn't reflect the competitive reality of the modern media environment.

"Because the national TV ownership rule is based on an irrational premise, the record offers no rational basis for retaining the existing 39 percent cap, or a cap set at any other level, using the flawed 100 percent reach metric—or an arbitrary 75, 66, 33, or pick-a-percentage reach metric—given the lack

of a credible connection between the concept of 'reach' and the FCC's goals," NAB wrote. "The rule's defective reliance on wholly 'theoretical,' but wholly unrealistic, audience reach is yet another reason for its elimination."

To drive home the point of an evolving industry, NAB added that broadcasters' most formidable competitors didn't exist in 2004. Beyond the tech giants, it also made note of the pending **Charter-Cox Communications** merger and "the growing scale of pay TV/broadband providers," saying "TV broadcasters' need to gain scale now represents a true emergency."

The decline in both local and national advertising revenues was highlighted in multiple filings. Scripps said its local stations have to compete with **Hulu**, **Prime Video** and others for advertising from small- and medium-sized local businesses. Nexstar mentioned the popularity of CTV advertising continuing to grow, while Sinclair cited the **Interactive Advertising Bureau** in saying 2025 digital video advertising is expected to capture nearly 60% of total video advertising.

"More broadly, in 2023, the U.S. advertising revenue of **Alphabet**, **Meta** and **Amazon** each exceeded the total advertising revenue of all U.S. broadcast television and radio stations combined. Social media platforms generate more than twice the revenue per hour of engagement as linear television, despite having zero content costs," Sinclair said.

One of the frequent questions in the national ownership debate is whether the FCC has the authority to revise or repeal the rule. Although Congress directed the FCC in 2004 to

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change the ownership cap from 35% to 39% (the FCC wanted it to be 45% at the time), “Congress clearly recognized that the Commission had authority to modify that cap, and its decision not to restrict that authority should be understood to have been intentional,” said Scripps.

All Opposed, Say ‘Nay’

On the other side of the argument, several organizations argued weakening or removing the cap would accelerate consolidation and diminish local journalism. Those in favor of no changes being made include **NTCA, NCTA, National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians—Communications Workers of America (NABET-CWA)** and the **National Hispanic Media Coalition**, as well as **Asian Americans Advancing Justice** and a group of 16 press freedom groups, civil liberties organizations and labor unions.

They argue that the FCC doesn’t possess the power to adjust the national cap, pointing to the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act that set the cap at 39%. “In expressly imposing the 39% national cap by statute and removing the cap from the Commission’s quadrennial ownership rules review, Congress eliminated the Commission’s authority to modify or repeal the cap,” NCTA commented.

NCTA, along with the **Free State Foundation**, also cited the **Supreme Court’s** decision to [overturn](#) the Chevron doctrine in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*. “Here, the best reading seems to be that, by replacing the 45 percent cap established by the FCC with one of its own choosing – 39 percent ... Congress intended to retain for itself the authority to define and/or modify the cap,” FSF said.

NTCA pleaded the case that relaxing the ownership cap would likely exacerbate the increase in retransmission consent fees its members pay to broadcasters. “In their most recent retransmission consent negotiations, rural MVPDs faced average fee increases of \$104,020 in 2024, a 33% increase over 2023 levels,” it said. “These MVPDs also reported that retransmission consent fees now represent an average of 37% of total operating expenditures in 2024, compared to 27.9% in 2023.”

Regarding consolidation, NABET-CWA suggested it would lead to job reductions, lower salaries and reduced benefits. In a [survey](#) it conducted among workers at Nexstar, NABET-CWA found 62% of workers earn less than the living wage for their metro area and more than 20% rely on a second job or overtime in order to make ends meet. For NHMC, continued media concentration would “undermine ownership opportunities available to Hispanic entrepreneurs and other under-represented groups” in a time of “abysmally low minority ownership of broadcast outlets.”

Some chimed in during the proceeding to throw a caution flag and offer solutions to appease both sides of the debate. FSF wants the FCC to avoid taking a piecemeal route that’d open the doors for “regulatory arbitrage,” suggesting it works with Congress in comprehensive reform. **Altafiber** suggested a social contract approach that would “provide needed flexibility for broadcasters while protecting the public interest and ensuring access of broadcast signals to viewers who rely on MVPD access.”

Reply comments in the docket will trickle in throughout the coming weeks. The deadline for those is Aug. 22

FOX DETAILS DISTRO & BUNDLE STRATEGY FOR FOX ONE

During a 4Q25 earnings call, **Fox Corp.** announced that its **Fox One** DTC streaming product will launch on Aug. 21, priced at \$19.99/month, with current Pay TV subs also getting access on an authenticated basis. The all-in-one subscription service offers Fox’s linear channels, including **Fox News, Fox Sports, Fox Business** and local stations, as well as VOD content. Users can also choose to bundle Fox One with **Fox Nation**, which will have its own tile on the DTC product’s home screen, for \$24.99/month. Fox CEO **Lachlan Murdoch** reiterated on the call that the company is targeting cord-cutters and cord-nevers with the new streamer in an effort to “engage with our viewers, wherever suits them best,” adding that “Fox One will additionally service another important audience segment: those wanting a paid, targeted offering encompassing all Fox brands.” Murdoch positioned Fox One as just one of the key “pillars” of the company’s distribution strategy that will “provide us access to the largest audience possible, and will underpin our growth in the years ahead,” alongside **Tubi’s** free premium content offerings and the traditional cable bundle, which he referred to as “our favorite distribution channel, as we believe it continues to provide exceptional value to consumers.” Fox is also looking at opportunities to bundle Fox One with other services, although none were revealed during the call. Murdoch said that Fox is “cognizant of two factors” when it comes to bundling the new streamer: “One is to offer the consumer the most convenient package of our content and channels and others that they desire to subscribe to, the most convenient, the most valuable bundles that you could put together. We know we’ll be in a position to help them do that, but we’re also very focused on keeping Fox One as a very targeted service that’s targeted on the cordless audience, and sometimes those two things can conflict with each other. So we want to stay very

targeted, but we also want to make it easy for our consumers and our viewers to gain our content, whether it's in conjunction with other services or not." Answering a question about the upfront costs of launching the service and the expected return, Murdoch said that "it's important to remember that none of the investment in Fox One is original programming or exclusive programming to that platform...None of that will include any incremental and sort of sticky additional spend. The new spend in Fox One, other than some overhead and some relatively modest tech costs, is really the marketing and launch costs of Fox One. And it's important to remember that our subscriber expectations or aspirations for Fox One are modest, and therefore our marketing spend is relatively modest compared to our peers as well. It's something that we can toggle up and down depending on how Fox One is going, and if we're meeting our relatively modest goal."

ROKU LAUNCHES 'ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE' SVOD HOWDY

Roku launched a new, budget-friendly SVOD called **Howdy**, which offers ad-free entertainment programming for \$2.99/month. The library will feature thousands of titles and nearly 10,000 hours of content from **Warner Bros. Discovery**, **Li- onsgate** and **FilmRise**, alongside select Roku Original titles. Roku Founder/CEO **Anthony Wood** touted in a statement that Howdy is "priced at less than a cup of coffee," adding that the service is an extension of the company's "mission to make better TV for everyone, by making it affordable, accessible and built for how people watch today." Wood explained that Howdy is "designed to complement, not compete with, premium services." Roku has been ramping its subscription service offerings in the past few months, also acquiring vMVPD **Frndly TV**, which gives users access to 50+ live channels, including **A&E**, **Hallmark Channel** and **The History Channel**, for \$6.99/month. **LightShed Partners** wrote in a [note](#) reacting to the Howdy launch that "by adding owned and operated subscription services, Roku has an increasing number of ways to monetize the traffic it directs from its home screen: drive users to The Roku Channel (which monetizes through advertising), drive to its subscription services, Frndly and Howdy, drive to third-party apps where it may or may not take a cut of ads and/or subscription fees and drive transactional pay-per-view."

FOX'S 4Q25 IS A STRONG FINISH FOR FISCAL YEAR

Fox Corp. reported total quarterly revenues of \$3.29 billion for 4Q25, 6% growth YOY, beating analysts' forecast of \$3.11 billion. Net income came in at \$719 million, a big boost YOY when compared to \$320 million in 4Q24. Adjusted EBITDA for the quarter was \$939 million, a 21% increase YOY, driven by affiliate fee and advertising revenue, which offset higher entertainment programming costs, digital content costs and corporate

expenses. Fox also reported lower sports programming rights amortization and production costs when compared to last year's broadcasts, which included the **UEFA** European Championships and **CONMEBOL** Copa America soccer tournaments. Total revenue for FY25 was \$16.3 billion, an increase of \$2.32 billion when compared to last year, a 17% increase. Adjusted EBITDA for FY25 was \$3.62 billion, 26% growth compared to prior year. Fox highlighted full-year ad rev growth of 26%, primarily due to Super Bowl LIX, higher political ad rev, continued digital growth led by Tubi and stronger news pricing and ratings. Affiliate fee revenue also increased by 5% for the year, driven by 7% growth at the Television segment of the business and 3% growth at the Cable Network Programming segment, which brought in \$1.53 billion in 4Q25, adding up to \$6.93 billion total rev for Cable in FY25, a 16% increase to prior year. Full-year ad rev for Cable also increased by 21% compared to prior year.

A/N HALTS SHARE REPURCHASE DEAL WITH CHARTER

Advance/Newhouse is suspending its share repurchase agreement with **Charter** as the latter navigates a pending merger with **Cox Communications**, according to an **SEC** filing on Monday. The agreement originates from the **Bright House Networks** transaction made nearly 10 years ago, but with Charter's stock in a state of flux lately, the move preserves A/N's ownership stake in Charter. Per Charter's filing, the suspension will extend through the closing of the Cox deal, or if the merger is called off.

NEW PARAMOUNT BOARD SET

Skydance Media continued to set the table ahead of the **Paramount** merger closing Thursday. With New Paramount's [leadership unit](#) now in place, including **David Ellison** as CEO and **Jeff Shell** as President, attention now turns to the company's new 10-member Board of Directors, which was announced Tuesday. Ellison will serve as Chairman. Fellow New Paramount execs Shell and CSO/COO **Andy Gordon** join him at the table. Three independent directors will sit on the board: **Barbara Byrne**, former Vice Chairman, **Barclays**; **Justin Hamill**, Managing Director/CLO, **Silver Lake**; and **Sherry Lansing**, former Chairman/CEO of Paramount Pictures. **RedBird Capital Partners** Founder/Managing Partner/CIO **Gerry Cardinale** and Chairman **John Thornton**, **Oracle** CEO **Safra Catz**, and **Lawrence Investments** President **Paul Marinelli** round out the group. "These highly qualified, world-class executives share in our commitment and will play a critical role in guiding the future direction of our combined company, and we are deeply grateful for their willingness to serve," Ellison said in a statement about the new board.

NATS, MASN TALK FUTURE

The decades-long dispute between the Washington Nationals and **MASN** once seemed like it would never end, until the two

[settled issues](#) related to the RSN in early March. The resolution meant the Nats needed to find a regional media rights partner after the 2025 season concludes, but maybe there's room for D.C.'s team and the Orioles-owned network to make up. Orioles President, Business Operations *Catie Griggs* [told](#) the *Baltimore Sun* that the Nats and MASN initiated talks regarding whether the team will stick with MASN beyond this season. MASN has said before it hopes to keep the Nats on the RSN alongside the O's, though it's uncertain what its competition entails. **Monumental Sports & Entertainment** Founder/CEO *Ted Leonsis* [said](#) in April that the only way it makes sense for **Monumental Sports Network** to acquire the Nats' rights is if Leonsis owns the team (despite rumors of fielding offers, the Nats aren't officially up for sale, and Leonsis already owns the Wizards, Capitals and Mystics). **FanDuel Sports Network** could step in and add to its portfolio, or **MLB** could take over production and distribute games itself.

PEACOCK ADDS BIG 12 HOOPS

A slate of 20 exclusive regular-season **Big 12** men's basketball games will now stream on **Peacock**. **NBC Sports** entered a multi-year deal with the Big 12 to add to the streamer's college hoops portfolio that already includes nearly 200 men's and women's **Big Ten** games and the **Big East**—not to mention the **NBA** and **WNBA** rights it's getting with the 2025-26 season.

GCI'S MOBILE MOVES

5G mobile service is now available to **GCI** customers in Petersburg, Alaska. It's the fifth southeast Alaskan community where GCI has improved mobile coverage this year, joining the rollout of two new 5G sites in Ketchikan and LTE enhancements in Kake, Metlakatla and Thorne Bay. More areas in the region will follow in the coming months, including Craig, Haines and Klawock.

NFL SUNDAY TICKET PERKS

YouTube is stirring up the excitement for the return of football, unveiling new perks and offers for **NFL Sunday Ticket** subscribers. The company said the 10 available options are worth up to \$460 in value and extend to those who signed up for the 2025-26 season (or 2024-25 and are set to auto-renew). Initial deals include a three-month free trial for new YouTube Premium users, or 50% off three months for existing members, as well as a \$15 discount on Google TV Streamer (4K) and 50% off a My Best Buy Plus membership. **Verizon** joined YouTube in the football hype by offering eligible customers Sunday Ticket for free. To get it, new and existing customers with a new line on myPlan can either buy a 5G phone or bring their phone to a Verizon store, or folks can sign up for a Fios 1 Gig, 2 Gig, 5G Home Ultimate or LTE Home Plus Internet plan. Additionally, on

Aug. 7 at 8pm, Verizon will make a limited number of tickets to NFL games available through the MyVerizon app.

ITF, TENNIS CHANNEL EXTEND

The **International Tennis Federation** and **Tennis Channel** extended their U.S. media rights pact through 2027. Tennis Channel will remain the TV home of the Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup—events that the network has held the rights to since 2009. However, the renewal also gives Tennis Channel international rights in several European markets, including Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the U.K.

MLF, RFD-TV REEL IN DEAL

RFD-TV and **Rural Media Group** hooked themselves a prize catch, signing a broadcast partnership with **Major League Fishing** to bring live tournament coverage from the MLF Team Series to a national audience for the first time. RFD-TV will air the final period of all 24 Team Series matches from 2:30-5pm, but it'll get things rolling Aug. 24 when it has a full-day broadcast of Day 1 of the B&W Trailer Hitches Challenge Cup in Michigan (10am-5pm). The media deal marks the first time MLF will have a live presence on a linear network since 1999, when **Fox** aired the Ranger M1 Millennium—the first time a bass fishing tournament appeared live on linear. On the call for that included *Joe Buck*, who was also Fox's MLB lead play-by-play commentator at the time.

DOING GOOD

Optimum, **News 12** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** are teaming up to host back-to-school programs to distribute thousands of backpacks filled with essential school supplies to students in communities across New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. These community-focused events will benefit children aged five to 18 and feature music, refreshments, activities and support from local nonprofit and community partners.

FIBER FRENZY

GoNetSpeed completed its \$7.6 million fiber network in Danbury, Connecticut. The network brings symmetrical speeds ranging from 500 Mbps to 2 Gigs to more than 14,300 households and businesses in the community.

PROGRAMMING

ESPN is bringing on *Katie Feeney* as a Sports and Lifestyle Content Creator. She'll contribute to ESPN's social and digital channels and appear on NFL and college football shows such as "Sunday NFL Countdown," "Monday Night Countdown" and "College GameDay." ESPN said Feeney will also create "vertical short-form video content designed for an enhanced ESPN App experience launching in early fall" and lead a revamped approach to "SportsCenter" on **Snapchat**, which reaches more than 9 million subscribers.